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## REVIEWS AND CRITICISMS

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THE MENTALITY OF THE CRIMINAL WOMAN. By *Jean Weidensall*, Ph. D. Formerly Director of the Department of Psychology, Laboratory of Social Hygiene, Bedford Hills, New York. Educational Psychology Monographs No. 14. Warwick & York, Inc. 1916. Pp. 332+xx.

Three years is the maximum time for which a woman may be committed to the New York Reformatory for Women, located at Bedford Hills. During her time as superintendent, Mrs. Katherine Bement Davis realized that the greater part of this time was spent in learning to distinguish the type of person committed. The time required for classification and for the determination of the special training needed in the individual case was so great that there was none left for the purpose of re-education.

She believed that all cases convicted in the courts should be studied by experts before sentence was passed. This study of the case would result in the determination of the proper place of commitment and the correct and satisfactory method of training. Since the great majority of the women had led lives of sexual irregularity, many of them having been actually engaged in lives of prostitution, such a careful study would also afford data indicating the causes which lead the individual into this life.

Following out this idea, various attempts were made in the direction of establishing a system of examinations. Among other things, application was made to the New York Foundation for a grant sufficient to meet the expenses of employing a trained psychologist on the Reformatory staff. The outcome of these attempts was the establishment of a laboratory of social hygiene. The purpose of this laboratory was three-fold: (1) To work out a methodology which may be applied in all necessary cases in order to determine a rational treatment. (2) To make a practical use of the results of our studies in determining earlier in their careers the special needs of all those committed to the Reformatory with a view to classification and treatment. (3) To furnish a large body of data as accurate as is obtainable under conditions imposed, which will bear on the causes of prostitution and delinquency among women, and possibly point a way to, or emphasize the need of special social reforms.

Two methods of procedure were possible for the laboratory staff. (a) Those who were obviously unfit might be eliminated in the first examination and later the attempt could be made with those whose record made an immediate decision impossible. (b) An attempt could be made to determine norms and the range of ability displayed by law-abiding women whose schooling, social, and industrial opportunities were similar to those of the women in the Reformatory. Without such norms no assumption could be made as to the deviation of the latter from the ordinary type.

To the first method of procedure there was the very obvious objection that no methods by which even the first classification could

be justified were in existence. The only available material was the series of Binet tests and "Suffice it to say that only one subject succeeded in proving herself as old as twelve years by these tests. It follows that, unmodified, they were inadequate for our purpose, for all of the inmates of the State Reformatory are not less than twelve years old mentally. Among those who failed to pass all the Binet tests was one who was an expert stenographer and another who had been a successful teacher in the Brooklyn public schools for a number of years."

It was discovered that "the norms and the data we so much needed were being in large part formulated by the Bureau of Vocational Guidance . . . in Cincinnati." This Bureau furnished to the Reformatory laboratory a series of tests which it had standardized for a group of school children who applied for their working certificates. These standards were for children fourteen and fifteen years old and the Reformatory inmates were considerably older, being on the average over 21 years. This difference was an advantage rather than otherwise since the best of the Reformatory women "tested very little better and sometimes less well than the fifteen-year-old group in all the mental tests save one." The Reformatory women tested were consecutive admissions from number 1702 to 1829 with the exception of the colored group and those of the white group who were too ill for the purpose. There were 100 in the group tested, the records for only 88 of whom are included in the monograph. The others, twelve in number, were omitted because of foreign birth. These omissions "tend to eliminate more of the less intelligent and less schooled ones, so that the final tables and curves are a little better, rather than a little worse than would have been the case could we have tested the women in their own language and included the whole hundred."

The results of these tests applied to the Reformatory women and their comparison with standard results, constitute a considerable portion of the monograph. In Chapters II. and III. the results are presented in graphical and tabular form. The tests used are the following: (1) Height, (2) Weight, (3) Strength of Grip, Right and Left Hand, (4) Rapidity of Movement and Indexes of Fatigue, (5) Steadiness of Hand, (6) Card Sorting, (7) Cancellation of the Letter "a", (8) Memory Span and the Per Cent of Seven, Eight, and Nine Digits remembered, (9) Substitution, (10) Completion of Sentences, (11) Association by Opposites.

In addition to this series, a number of tests which are described in Chapter IV. were used. Some of these had been used in the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute in Chicago. "Their extensive use by Healy and their standardization for normal children by his former assistant . . . furnish norms in terms of which the criminal woman may be compared with the recidivists of the Juvenile Court and with the pupils in the first six grades in 'certain large private school . . . attended by children from unusually intelligent families.'" Other tests are: Handwriting, the value of which has been determined by the use of both

Ayres' and Thorndike's Handwriting Scales; Ability to Follow Instructions; Formation of New Motor Habits; etc. The discussion of these tests is irrelevant to the remainder of the monograph and in reading "may be omitted without disturbing the continuity of the rest of the study."

Chapter V. discusses the Social, Industrial, and Physical records. The age at leaving school with the reason for leaving; the number of positions held, with wage and reasons for leaving each; the offences leading to commitment, both present and past; all these, and more, are included in the discussion of the social and industrial factors. In the medical record there was, an attempt to determine not only the disease or diseases from which they now suffered, but also any history of illness was investigated. In reference to the reliability of the information concerning the social and industrial conditions, the writer clearly indicates a problem which anyone who attempts to work with similar subjects must appreciate. She reports the type of information obtainable; "They worked 'until they were married'—and how long ago was that? 'About three years'—it may have been two or four. 'I began to work after my baby . . . was born.' When was that? 'Well, let me see; I am twenty-one; the baby was born when I was seventeen, no, when I was sixteen, and that makes the baby four years old now, and so I must have been working about four years.' Or 'I held that job a long time.' How long? 'Three or four months,' or 'I was there six months or a year—I don't know.' The inquirer is baffled both by their heedlessness and their inventions."

The final chapter, even though it is designated "Summary and Conclusions," does not contain all the important conclusions. "In giving the directions to our subjects there has been throughout one divergence from the standard; we have spoken much more slowly and with greater emphasis than was necessary in the case of the Cincinnati group . . . Testing this type of woman steadily for three years with many varieties of test has brought the conviction that the essential thing which lies at the basis of their variation from the normal is *a slowness to understand what is required of them that is quite disproportionate to their absolute ability ultimately to comprehend and accomplish the task in question.*" Also "It is astonishing how long and uncritically some of the more stupid women will persevere in a task completely beyond their understanding."

In the final chapter the most striking fact is said to be, that in comparing the results of the tests obtained from the Bedford women with the standard results from the Cincinnati Bureau, the former show a bimodal distribution as opposed to the unimodal distribution of the latter. "In practically all the tests the curves of the Bedford group fall from one mode at a point near the better end of the Cincinnati curves, to rise again to form a second mode at the poorer end of the standard curves." The other tests tried also lead to this conclusion. "Reading, Writing, Direction Tests, etc., have added evidence that the Reformatory inmates constitute two pretty distinct groups with respect

to their intelligence." In analyzing the bimodal curve, it was found that those who had completed at least the 5th B grade in the schools formed a curve which paralleled very closely the curve of the Cincinnati fifteen-year-old group. Those who had not succeeded in making this much progress were the majority of those who collected around the lower mode.

The comparison of the standard group and this group of Bedford women results frequently to the disadvantage of the latter. In reference to some of the tests the statement is made, "*We may therefore set it down with some finality that approximately 40 per cent. of the Bedford group are decidedly less efficient in whatever these tests measure than is the average Cincinnati working girl of fifteen.*" How much more efficient the so-called normal group would be when they had reached the same age as the Bedford women, the report does not attempt to estimate. When the working girl was re-tested at age of fifteen, she surpassed her previous record in every phase of every test. If this progress is continuous for the succeeding five or six years, "there are very few of the type of criminal woman that is sentenced to a Reformatory such as Bedford, who are normal adults in the mental characteristics and abilities measured by these tests."

Let us conclude the review in the words of the Editor's preface: "The results are of prime importance both to workers with mental tests and to practical penologists who seek to individualize punishment in such a manner as to meet the needs of the offender as well as the needs of the offense."

Municipal Court, Philadelphia

DAVID MITCHELL.

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THE FORENSIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INHERITANCE OF MORPHOLOGIC ABNORMALITIES AND OF FINGER PRINT CHARACTERISTICS. By R. Sommer. *Archiv f. Kriminologie*, 1916, Band 67, pp. 161-174.

Sommer cites the case of J. T. who was accused by N. C. of being the father of her illegitimate child. J. T.'s persistent denial and the persistent accusations of the girl led to a call for experts.

The evidence presented bore on the physical similarity between the supposed father J. T. and the child, the most damaging of which appeared to be the existence of syndactylyism in both. With J. T. this abnormality involved the second and third toes of the right foot, and possibly also the same toes of the left. With the child B. C. it involved the second and third toes, not only of the right foot, but also most markedly of the left.

In discussing this point, Sommer mentions the possibility of this coincidental occurrence being merely accidental. He substantiates this fact by indicating the lack of similarity between the photographs of the supposed father and the child, especially as regards forehead formation.

As to the value of similarity of finger prints, which had previously been taken for the purpose of tracing familial relationship, there were doubts.